

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Claims 1-38 (canceled)

39. (currently amended) Food holding apparatus for holding pre-cooked food at a selected holding temperature, said apparatus comprising:

a cabinet having a plurality of holding compartments for holding said pre-cooked food therein;

a heat source in each compartment of said plurality of compartments for delivering heat to the food in the compartment; and

a control mechanism programmed to vary the heat delivered by each heat source to the food in a respective holding compartment through a duration of holding time during which:[[.]]

said control mechanism operates to activate said heat source such that said duration

~~comprising~~ comprises a first ~~phase~~ period of time during which the heat source operates at a first ~~level~~ duty cycle whereby ~~and~~ the food reaches said selected holding temperature,

said control mechanism operates to activate said heat source such that said duration

comprises a second ~~phase~~ period of time after the first period of time during which the heat source operates at a second ~~level~~ duty cycle different from said first ~~level~~ duty cycle whereby ~~to hold~~ the food is held at said selected holding temperature, and

said control mechanism operates to activate said heat source such that said duration

comprises a third ~~phase~~ period of time after the second period of time at which the heat source operates at a third ~~level~~ duty cycle different from said first and second ~~levels~~ duty cycles whereby ~~to maintain~~ the food is maintained at said selected holding temperature.

40. (Currently amended) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said second level duty cycle is less than said first level duty cycle and said third level duty cycle is greater than said second level duty cycle but less than said first level duty cycle.

41. (Currently amended) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 40 wherein said second level duty cycle is ~~0% of a maximum power duty cycle of said heat source~~ zero.

42. (Previously presented) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 40 wherein said heat source is located in a bottom wall of a respective holding compartment of said plurality of compartments.

43. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 41 wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments comprises opposite side walls which are not heated.

44. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 43 wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments comprises a top wall which is not heated.

45. (Currently amended) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said second ~~level~~ duty cycle is greater than said first ~~level~~ duty cycle and said third ~~level~~ duty cycle is less than said second ~~level~~ duty cycle but greater than said first ~~level~~ duty cycle.

46. (Currently amended) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim ~~39~~ 45 wherein said first ~~level~~ duty cycle is ~~0% of a maximum power level of heat source~~ zero.

47. (Previously presented) Food holding apparatus as set forth in claim 46 wherein said heat source is located adjacent a top wall of a respective holding compartment of said plurality of compartments for emitting radiant heat down on said food.

48. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 further comprising a vertical partition in the cabinet dividing the cabinet into a plurality of separate side-by-side compartments, and wherein said control mechanism is programmed for controlling operation of

the heat sources independent of one another whereby the temperature in each compartment of said plurality of compartments may be independently controlled.

49. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism comprises an operator display device for counting down a time remaining in said duration of holding time.

50. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism comprises at least one sensor in each holding compartment of said plurality of compartments for detecting a characteristic indicative of the temperature of the food in the compartment, the control mechanism being responsive to signals from said sensor to vary the amount of heat delivered by a respective heat source.

51. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 50 wherein said sensor is a temperature sensor for detecting the temperature of a surface in a respective compartment of said plurality of compartments.

52. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 50 wherein said sensor is operable to detect radiant energy emitted by the food in a respective compartment of said plurality of compartments.

53. (Currently amended) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism is programmed to operate each heat source ~~is operable~~ during each of said first, second and third periods of time in successive time-based cycles, each time-based cycle comprising a ~~first~~ predetermined on-time interval during which the heat source is activated and a ~~second~~ predetermined off-time interval during which said heat source is de-activated, and wherein said control mechanism is programmed to vary the amount of heat by changing the ratio of said predetermined on-time interval to the sum of said predetermined on-time and off-time intervals.

54. (Currently amended) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein said control mechanism varies the amount of heat ~~by increasing and decreasing the level of heat~~ delivered by said heat source without deactivating the heat source.

55. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 further comprising a cover secured to one or more walls of at least one of the compartments of said plurality of compartments for covering a pan in said at least one compartment to inhibit the escape of moisture from food in the pan.

56. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 55 wherein said cover floats up and down to accommodate pans having different heights placed in said at least one compartment of said plurality of compartments.

57. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 wherein the compartments of said plurality of compartments are arranged side-by-side.

58. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 57 further comprising a plurality of pans for placement in said plurality of compartments, and wherein each compartment of said plurality of compartments is sized for receiving only one of said pans per compartment.

59. (Previously presented) Apparatus as set forth in claim 39 further comprising pre-cooked food in each holding compartment of said plurality of holding compartments, said radiant heat source in the holding compartment being spaced above the food a distance less than 30.5 cm for delivering radiant heat to the food.